



**Plan Ahead:** Create an environment that enhances well-being with planning, prevention, management and teamwork. Puppy-proof the house, putting away unmentionables, breakables and unsafe chewing objects like slippers, children's toys and the remote controls. Set up crates, baby gates and decide on a schedule for feeding, playing and exercising. Time-out is important for puppies, adopted dogs and older dogs. See [Housetraining at a Glance](#) on line at [Dog Talk.com](#).

**Create a Behavior Wish List:** Training and well-being is a lifelong, lifestyle choice. Choosing wisely now can save you heart-ache in the future. Listen skeptically to media and advice. All puppies / dogs need wellness checks, healthy nutrition, grooming, exercise and love to thrive. In what dosages, kind, where, when and for how long is individual (dog and human). Create a wish list for realistic behaviors you want to see in the adult dog (family companion, sports, pet therapy).

**Set yourself and the Dog up for Success:** Dogs are a different species relying heavily on body language and vocalization. **Observing** dogs safely playing together can teach you a lot about how dogs interact if it is safe, and the other dogs know how to play respectfully. Gentle training, behaviors and habits begin early with puppies or children. Awareness centered training is focused and in the moment. Successful training can easily happen in 3-focused minutes by integrating it into daily living. Teaching / prevention / confinement / scheduling / games with boundaries/time limits, supervision of children and dogs, dogs with other dogs, and dogs will visitors is a learned skill. Begin early teaching sit (good meet/greet manners) in front of humans before .

**Kindness and Simplicity:** Teach with the same kindness and level of difficulty that you would like when learning something new. Dogs are as individual as we are! Puppies, older or adopted dogs have histories and different energy levels and needs. Being your dog's best advocate means setting achievable tasks (small successes) with kindness. If a dog does not respond the way you want, there is a good reason: stress, communication, not trained, fearful, not feeling well, bored.

**Teach Incrementally:** If your dog will not do what you want him too; go back to the step where s/he was most successful. Puppies have the attention span of a 2-year child. The important thing is meeting their needs.

**Dogs are Contextual!** Teach your dog to sit in every room in the house. Expand this to the environment (walks, park). Safely and calmly introduce your pup to a variety of places with different sights, sounds, smells and other distractions. Body language (posture): If you teach a dog to sit while you are standing, teach it while you are sitting too. Each of these positions is a distinct situation to the dog. Have you taught your dog to stand-stay from 5 feet away when other people are around? How about when the vacuum is on; the baby is crying; or when the doorbell rings?

**Keep Sessions Short, Fun (Baby Steps): Three steps forward, two steps back, one step ahead!** Training does not start and stop. It is on a continuum. Training sessions can be quiet and formal to teach specific behaviors. It can be integrated into daily living with family members, friends and visitors. Short sessions will increase attention. Keeping your dog engaged and motivated will increase learning ability and save you time. Dogs should joyfully anticipate being with you and training as part of everyday living and learning together. No dog, and especially puppies, should have to fear learning.

**8-steps to every behavior:**

- Take a deep breath & focus
- Get attention & the behavior
- Add the request like sit!
- Mark it with "yes" or clicker.
- Reward (higher value for best behaviors)
- Challenge: Add the 4(D's), distance, duration, distraction and diversity
- Be aware, and integrate it daily
- Be flexible and enjoy the journey!

**Dog's behavioral age compared to humans, and considering genetics, environment, awareness and education:**

1. At 1-year, most dogs are about 15.
2. 2-years about 24.
3. 3-years about 30.
4. Aging your dog is a matter of environment and health
5. Age about 5-years to 1-human year.

**Life Rewards (LR) and High Value Motivation (HVM):** Life rewards and motivators are natural, powerful and empowering training tools. You become a respected pack leader when you effectively, with awareness, manage and dole out these rewards. What are you dog's favorite life rewards? What motivates them to stay alive and thrive? The highest, for most dogs, is food, play, touch, toys and sniffing. Dogs sniff in Technicolor, so put it on reward while walking or "finding" something. They have to eat or they will die. Playing teaches how, with boundaries (just like sports). Start now, stop now.

**Doggy Diner:** If you feed your dog 2X a day, you have **14 training opportunities a week** to teach watch-me, sit, down, wait, leave-it, take-it and come. The mantra is "you do something for me and I'll do something for you." This develops a respectful relationship, not a fearful one. [Doggy Diner](#), by Maureen Ross, MA, LET Series.

**Emotions and the Dog:** They have them and they sense ours. This isn't guesswork. We have all experienced how strong our relationships are with dogs. Dogs are habitual. Their senses are several times more powerful than ours. Dogs are keen observers of body language and chemical imbalance. They are our friends and confidants. However, no dog should be expected to take on our emotional stress on a daily basis without time for personal renewal. Puppies should NEVER have this job anymore than children. Dogs need time to be dogs and relax. They aren't our husbands, partners, doctors, therapists or anger pillows. They aren't vengeful. They are our friends and part of the family. We are a team. A good way to tell how your day will go is to see if your dog will come to you happily. If they don't, heed their advice. Decompress before venturing into the world.

**Safe Socialization:** All dogs require socialization to desensitize to sights, sounds, smells, other dogs, and people in the environment. Doled out in gradual dosages is the best way. How we react matters too. Dog parks, socials and doggy daycare are considerations, not magic or one size fits all. Interview to be sure that this is the best approach for your individual puppy/dog. Some dogs are content not playing in a dog park. Dogs can learn inappropriate behaviors, in dog parks/packs, if not supervised by an experienced facilitator.

**Environment versus us:** We lose. The environment will win because it is exciting and unpredictable, and so are humans! We can never know what to expect, including our dog's reaction to something new, when on walks. The environment is potently exciting for dogs. With awareness, prevention, management, and a well-trained dog, who looks to us for guidance, we can be more confident, but not 100%. Life throws curve balls. What starts as a peaceful walk, may end with someone's dog, at the end of a flexi-lead, jumping into our dog's face. Being prepared to turn around, redirect, ask for a sit, and educate the human is about the best there is. Carefully desensitize your dog to a variety of situations and maintain a reliable relationship with your dog.

**Sensory Overload (SO):** Dogs senses are keener than ours by about 50-75 times. Consider our SO today with technology, electronics, cell phones, society and competition for the latest and greatest. Dogs suffer from sensory overload too. Our dogs reaction to change may surprise us when in overload. Be sure your dog gets time to relax. Take a mindful 10-minute to breathe and center before training, walking or playing. [Through-a-Dog's Ear](#) has a series of beautiful music by [Joshua Leeds](#) and [Lisa Spector](#) that you can play during these 10-minutes, or for your dog in the day time. I meditate to this music with my dogs. A new series of Canine Desensitization CD's from Victoria Stilwell (It's me or the Dog) beautifully pairs life's sounds, in incremental levels (low, mid, intense), with calming music. It works without flooding!

**Brain Break:** Every day we, and our dogs, need several 10-minute brain breaks. At work, home or while training, take a brain break. Our brain needs oxygen to calm down and re-energize.

**As Simple as A.B.C: These are simple and apply to humans too!** There is always an antecedent (something happens prior) to a Behavior. The Behavior can be negative or positive. The Consequence can be negative or positive, but must be understandable and fair to teach. Most of the time, a puppy or dog does something wrong because they haven't been taught what to do, where, when and for how long.

**As Easy as 1.2.3. Behavior Shaping | Re-Shaping:** Almost all behaviors can be shaped or re-shaped using this simply formula. 1. Awareness: being aware of what you don't like is informative. 2. Do not keep reinforcing the behavior you don't like, and 3. Teach and reinforce the behavior you do want.

**Reinforce (Snapshot) Spontaneous GOOD Behavior:** Rewarding likeable behaviors works with puppies and humans. The probability of getting the desired behavior increases.

**Treats and Touch:** Jackpots versus co-dependent food treating -- At first give the dog treats or praise for best behaviors. Gradually, diversify with “life rewards” like going for a walk, a belly rub or massages, playing favorite games (favorite toy). Touching a dog while they are doing something you DO NOT WANT, like barking and jumping, rewards that behavior. We all do it! Laughing at a seemingly cute puppy behavior reinforces that behavior. Imagine a 10lb Newf puppy jumping on you? Now imagine a 120lb Newf jumping on you. Your choice, but I prefer having my dogs respond to a request, so I can brace myself. Otherwise, I, or someone fragile, may be put through a wall.

**Give a Dog a Job!** Dogs with directed jobs stay out of harm’s way and mischief! Channel their energy into a positive outlet with guided exercise and play. Shift these dog occupations -- Gardener, Official Crotch Greeter, Home Decorator, Home Security Police, Hunter, Herder, Firefighter, Excavator, and Garbage Cleaner into more focused dog jobs.

**Be a Proactive and Creative Employer:** Know your dog. Provide an outlet to expend energy in with job related skills (directed games, exercise). Employees need a sense of self, purpose and pride. Dogs love to please us, so give them performance evaluations. If they have done a good job, thank them and give them a raise. Jobs have descriptions, boundaries, and require team work. Provide them with a description. Check in regularly to see if they understand the project guidelines. This may mean a bone(us) of digging, barking, jumping and chewing. Focused in the right directions, at appropriate times, and with the right stuff, will create a contented dog. Burying a bone in a sandbox and/or fencing an area (digging zone) for excavating will help channel this energy. Exercising a couple of times a day, for 10-15 minutes, may be all a dog needs. Other options: walking, playing with boundaries, retrieving, finding something behind a tree or under a mat. Have an assortment of “smart, therapeutic, indestructible chew toys” AND teach them what to do with them.

For the door police, teach 3-barks, and then say “thank you and quiet”. If they continue barking, teach a counter-behavior like getting the Kong or stuffed teddy, as a pacifier. Firefighters (dogs who mark continuously) need to be confined, put on a bathroom break schedule, and praised when they put out real fires.

**Timing is Essential:** Dogs live in the NOW / PRESENT. Seconds after a behavior is too late for meaningless corrective reprimands. Stuff your emotions. Correction works when you catch a dog in the moment, doing something you don’t like, and say “ah or no” then teach what you do want. 98% of the time if a dog has done something wrong (in our eyes, not theirs) it is time for us to pick up a mirror. Dogs should never be left in an environment, without supervision, for longer than then they can reliably tolerate it, and especially with children.

**Children:** Young children are egocentric (seeing the whole world through the lens of their own wants and desires). Puppies are too. Supervised, they can be great friends. It teaches children to recognize and value the feelings of others (empathy). Under 12, children should NOT be left unsupervised with dogs.

**Ask for HELP:** If you cannot figure out how to train your dog or you are having difficulty, ask for help. Listen, but be skeptical, to advice from people who haven’t lived joyfully with a dog.

**Aggression and resource guarding issues require the assistance of an experienced behaviorist / trainer. Housetraining can be resolved in 1-2 sessions. Behaviors that are reactive, fearful, resource guarding, or cause injury, need time with multiple repetitions and practice to resolve.**

**Enjoy the journey:** Have fun! At the core, we love our dogs. Awareness centered training’s core is common sense and kindness. Listen to your “gut” intuition. It will guide you. Engage with your dogs, noticing, observing them on a daily basis. Are they well? Are you? How is the relationship going? Is it working for you?

Breathe in deeply; take a 10-minute brain break. Exhale into teaching with respect, the same that we expect when we are learning something new!